

CHAPTER 1

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: TOWARD THE MULTI-PARADIGM¹

Łukasz Sułkowski, Regina Lenart-Gansiniec

Introduction

Human resources management is the basis of every organisation, regardless of its line of business or specificity. At the foreground, there is the perception of human resources as a source of competitive advantage of the organisation, which means that knowledge, skills and experience of employees are considered to be the most valuable asset. Such a perspective is observed also in the public sector, which with increasing frequency is oriented on resources that would allow a public organisation to achieve results in keeping with its strategic direction. As a result, new challenges arise that impact human resources management, especially those related to the shift from the role of a manager in favour of a proactive leader. In this context, we should highlight the features of the new human resources management paradigm which could provide an alternative to the ones already in existence, and constitute an answer to the challenges public organisations are facing.

The objective of this chapter is to reflect on the multi-paradigm in human resources management, particularly in the context of proactive leadership in the public sector. The ambition of the chapter is not to shift the paradigm, but only to indicate possible changes in the most common cognitive approach proposed by G. Burrell and M. Morgan. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part analyses the typologies of human resources management paradigms with the use of the division developed by G. Burrell and G. Morgan. In the second part, the research focus is directed toward “megatrends” in human resources management in the public sector. The third and final part features an analysis of the possibilities of using the multi-paradigm in proactive leadership in the public sector.

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Paradigms of human resources management

The word “paradigm” comes from the Greek word παράδειγμα, meaning an example, a pattern, a primary model of sensory things, a schematic model with didactic value, providing a clear and direct examination of particularly complex studies (Jodkowski, 1990). Originally, it was an exclusively linguistic term, used to describe a set of declensions or conjugation forms specific to a given type of word. It was introduced to the philosophy of science in the 18th century by George Christopher Lichtenberg, and it indicated certain fundamental patterns of explaining in physical sciences, on which networks of explanations are built (Jodkowski, 1990).

The notion of paradigm was introduced to the philosophy of science in 1962 by Thomas Kuhn. For Kuhn, a paradigm means a set of basic notions, beliefs and theories which make up the foundations of a given science; a notion scheme created for the purpose of describing and interpreting the observed or concluded phenomena, which headed toward the creation of ascertainable, scientific knowledge open to verification. Therefore, according to T. Kuhn, the paradigm signifies commonly recognised scientific achievements which at some point in time would provide model problems and solutions. It includes common postulates related to the nature of the organisational reality, the way it is examined, criteria of scientific truth, attitude toward values, identification of the researcher and attitude toward management practice (Sułkowski, 2016). One could venture a statement that the paradigm is the worldview currently in force, the way of looking at the world. Nevertheless, it is not a blueprint or a model, as it contains evaluative and cultural elements, thanks to which “cumulation of knowledge, progress occurs” (Kuhn, 1985).

Management studies distinguish many various paradigm classifications. However, most frequently researchers refer to the typology proposed by G. Burrell and G. Morgan (1979). Their proposition discerns the following paradigms: neo-positivist-functionalist-systems (aka neo-positivist, systemic or quantitative), interpretive-symbolic, the paradigm of radical structuralism, and postmodern (Table 1). They permeate human resources management as well.

The Neo-positivist-Functionalist-Systems paradigm is dominant in human resources management both in theory and in practice. It combines the influences of neo-positivist philosophy with the systemic approach and functionalism (Sułkowski, 2004). It means that recruitment, selection and training, as well as motivation, promotion and all personnel strategies concentrate on the necessity to define an employee’s competences, their personality traits, knowledge, skills and psychophysical abilities, using A. Maslow’s pyramid and F. Herzberg’s diagram of needs.

Table 1.1 The main paradigms in management studies

Criterion	Paradigms			
	Neo-positivist- Functionalist- Systems	Interpretive/ Symbolic	Radical Structuralism	Postmodern
Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propositions, definitions • Hypotheses • Statements about facts • Causal relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical constructs • Interpretations • Interrelations • Descriptions and studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical constructs • Statements about facts • Actors and groups • Structures of power and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrations • Discourses • Opinions • Theoretical constructs
Results	Cause-and-effect relations	Interpretations proposed by organisational actors embedded in the networks of meaning	Descriptions that unmask concealed relations of power and oppression which lead to actions	Autopoietic discourses leading to ethical reflection
Individual in the organisation	Individualism, stimulus-reaction pattern	Culturalism, makes sense of the organisation	Activism, changes the organisation	Anti-essentialism, voting and making ironic remarks
The objectivism of theory	Objectivism	Intersubjectivism	Intersubjectivism	Subjectivism
Role in management	Dominant	Increasing	Increasing	Marginal
Verification the verification and the falsification of theory	Verification or falsification	Interpretivism and constructivism	Interpretivism or weak verificationism	Constructivism
Key theoretical threads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy • Structure • Management functions • The theory of organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Organisational culture • Organisational behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A human being in the organisation • Power, oppressiveness, manipulation • The ideology of managerialism • Denaturalisation of management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textualism of the organisation – rhetoric, poetics, archetypes, metaphors, paradoxes • The moral problems of managerialism
Methodology	Quantitative	Qualitative	Qualitative	No Methodology or Qualitative
The attitude to valuation	Axiological neutrality	Moderate axiological neutrality	Involvement in valuation	Involvement in valuation
The researcher's position	No interference	Involvement	Learning, changing reality	Deconstruction of the narrative
Attitude	Analytical	Interpretation	Critical	Distrustful

Key threads in human resources management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Selection • Training • Motivation • Assessment • Advancing • Planning the career development path • Strategy • Personal strategies • Control over an employee's actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • De-Recruitment • Integration and motivation of employees • Leadership • Organisational culture and identity • Managerial roles • Social capital • Communication • Cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulating members of the organisation • Situations of inequality and power • Communication processes • Negotiations • Managerial identity issues • Power and its abuse in organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual's problems in the organisation • Issues of sexuality in the workplace • Creating hyper-reality as work environment • Involving intellectual capital in the problems of domination • Deconstruction of traditional notions of human resources management • Problem of disintegration of individual identity in a consumer society
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Source: own work based on Sułkowski, 2011.

For an in-depth interpretation of human behaviours which constitute the basis of all activities undertaken in the organisation, an evolutionist paradigm may be used. Such a combination of evolutionary management with behavioural economics could contribute to the explanation of various social issues that may occur in organisations, such as: biological roots of organising, sources of the power structure, competition and struggle for domination, leadership, learning, group and organisational bonds, taking risks, communication, sexual behaviours, and conditions of societal and organisational culture. It is also indicated that this paradigm might be useful in the research on human resources management – it takes into account the structure of needs as well as psychological and social motives of actions (Sułkowski, 2010).

The interpretive/symbolic paradigm emerged in the opposition to functionalism (Sułkowski, 2011). The sources of inspiration are, among others: social and political sciences, humanities, and cultural anthropology. This leads to social constructivism and shaping of social reality with the use of the cognitive role of the language. The key to creating the theory is intuition, common norms and values, as well as understanding and capturing the sense and involvement of social groups. The foundation is the assumption that the organisational order does not exist objectively but is created by a social group. Organisations are understood as symbolic activities, forms of human expression and creativity, while planning is a source of integration and motivation for the employees.

The paradigm of radical structuralism is based on the critical analysis of practice and the assumption of the existence of an objective reality that can be remodelled. It also involves uncovering concealed mechanisms of power, domination, social inequality, as well as manipulating members of the organisation. Oftentimes this paradigm is applied to analyse problems with communication, interpretation, negotiations, managerial and organisational identity, power and violence in organisations. To a large extent, the role of the researcher is discovering social mechanisms and changing reality.

The paradigm of radical structuralism has been evolving since the 1990s and it has transformed into a critical paradigm. Similar to postmodernism and interpretivism, it ranks among alternative management paradigms “that build their identity on the antinomy in relation to the dominant neo-positivist-functional-systems paradigm” (Sułkowski, 2012). Nevertheless, the issues of power, oppression of social structures, and criticism of modernity link the critical paradigm with postmodernism. But the critical paradigm in opposition to postmodernism aims at discovering changes of reality as well as objectively or intersubjectively existing relationships of dominance. Such an approach is linked to cultural relativism, an interpretive, processual vision of organising, the key role of communication processes, distribution of power, unmasking organisational order, power, institutions, managerial identity, development of science and inclinations toward qualitative methods. Meanwhile, management in this movement is treated like a means to manipulate the members of the organisation. Human resources management in the critical current is the ideology of “managerism” in which “managers use the project of quasi-objective science that is supposed to indicate universal, effective and idealised human resources management practices in organisations” (Sułkowski, 2011). According to this current, the aim of human resources management is the reduction of work costs, rationalisation of inequalities and exploitative relationships of power and work, as well as generating profits. It is accepted to use symbolic violence for the purpose of impelling the employee to make more effort.

Postmodernist approach is rarely encountered in the literature. It is subjective, cognitively relative, characterised by programme inconsistency and distrust toward science. It largely questions the possibility of finding out the truth which results in problems with the application of the scientific approach. The essential thread in this approach is the problem of an individual in the organisation, among others: the problem of sexuality, loss of job security and trust toward members of the organisation, disintegration of human identity in the consumer society, entanglement of intellectual capital in the issues of dominance, and deconstruction of traditional concepts from the domain of human resources management.

“Megatrends” in human resources management in the public sector

Newly arising challenges related to human resources management and public organisations as well as the multitude of cognitive perspectives have become the reason for the emergence of new trends in the development of human resources management (Table 2). What is the outcome of the application of organisational solutions known from the private sector in the public sector?

Table 1.2 “Megatrends” in human resources management in the public sector

Past	Future
Organisational hierarchy	Flat organisation
Restructuration	Management of knowledge continuity
Manager	Proactive and transactional leader
Clerk-employee	Business partner
Job position	Self-managing teams
Skills	Competences
Mechanistic attitude	Orientation on the customer
System of careers	System of positions

Source: own work.

Firstly, the shift of responsibility for human resources management. The shift of an HR manager’s responsibility toward line managers is observed. This change causes a new, separate function in the organisation to emerge – line managers become responsible for all tasks previously performed by HR personnel. Therefore they are responsible not only for the management, but also employment, managing efficiency, training, planning and motivating. Secondly, employees become business partners of the organisation, which means they can participate in creating and implementing strategies, and making decisions about future actions of the organisation. Thirdly, a shift in the relationship between employees and managers. Apart from the change in the organisational structure, and building an employee-friendly organisation, a change of the orientation of the organisation’s management occurs. Fourthly, the focus on internal and external customers. The necessity to measure satisfaction and contentment of these stakeholders must be noted. Fifthly, attention to employees’ development. This relates to the formulation of the entire process of human resources management that takes into account continuous development of employees’ skills and competences. Sixthly, proactive leadership. The managerial staff in the public sector takes initiative, launches a certain action, initiates it, is able to find the best

solution (Seibert et al., 2001), and actively seeks out information to expand knowledge resources (Crant, 2000).

The review of the “megatrends” does not exhaust all major tendencies in human resources management in public organisations. However, it indicates the departure from the traditional way human resources are managed in favour of common values held by all employees, as well as proactive leadership.

Toward the multi-paradigm of human resources management in the public sector

Contemporary operations of the public sector are determined by fundamental changes, often forced by the environment, mounting expectations of the citizens, development of civic society, democratisation of the public life, the necessity to treat citizens like customers (Borins, 2001; Pollitt, Bouckaer, 2004), and including them in the creation of new products, solutions, and streamlining processes (McGuire, 2006; Alford, 2009). In view of the factors presented above, traditional administration in the public sector has been discredited both in theory and in practice. As a result, public organisations depart from traditional administration in favour of public management (Hausner, 2002), and thus they start to draw from general management rules. For the practice of public organisations management it means first of all the necessity to make an optimal use of the civic society’s potential, orientation toward subsidiarity rules, decentralisation, participation, and cooperation in performing public tasks. Apart from that, the management of public organisations should pay much attention to the openness, e-communication, effectiveness, accountability, and necessity to inscribe innovation in strategies of these organisations. Which means that a perspective that takes into account only one paradigm is not sufficient. New concepts are a reference to one of the paradigms, and often a combination of shared premises of paradigms, a search for transitional areas between them, identification of scientific paradoxes and new research fields (Sagan, 2013) – as a result, new attitudes and approaches emerge.

In line with the objective of this chapter, the application of the multi-paradigm will be illustrated with the example of proactive leadership which is postulated in the public sector with increasing frequency. Proactive leadership is understood as the attitude in which the managerial staff takes initiative, launches a certain action, initiates it, is able to find the best solution (Seibert et al., 2001), and actively seeks out information to expand knowledge resources (Crant, 2000). It requires the managers to identify the possibility and willingness to introduce changes in the work organisation (Crant, 1995), efficient leadership (Bateman, Crant, 2000), or entrepreneurship (Becherer, Maurer, 1999). Addition-

ally, this type of leadership, due to initiative taking, identification and problem-solving skills (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, Tag, 1997), contributes to the increase in employees' motivation to acquire external knowledge (Sonnentag, 2003). A proactive leader knows how to take actions that can impact changes in the environment, which may lead to creating innovation, improving creativity, productivity and efficiency.

As it has already been mentioned, the choice of a paradigm is important not only from the perspective of theory building, but also practice. It means adopting certain ontological, epistemological and axiological premises in the organisational reality. It is not, however, that simple; increasingly often conflicts, inadmissibility, integration and hybridisation of paradigms are observed (Sułkowski, 2012), which means that the juxtaposition of two, often contradictory, paradigms can create paradoxes. The situation may require new, alternative paradigms.

It is emphasised that human resources management is a science that employs psychology, sociology and economics. It means that the area of research is broad and interdisciplinary, as it concerns problems of management and organisation (management, personnel strategies, organisational culture), issues from the field of social psychology (motivation, socialisation), sociology (identification, power, communication), and education. Human resources management is therefore considered dualistic – and each of the previously analysed four paradigms relies on different cognitive foundations. For this reason, many authors suggest the application of the multi-paradigm as an approach to human resources management research (Ehnert, 2009; Lewis, Kelemen, 2002).

Moreover, many theoretical perspectives may be used to study proactive leadership. In the neopositivist-functionalist-systems paradigm, proactive leadership may be considered in the context of recruitment, personality traits, and ways to motivate employees. This is the dominant approach.

Evolutionism indicated the criteria for creating leadership based primarily on the authority, social respect and readiness of the members of the organisation for submission and dependency. A leader's competences and skills, such as: cooperation with employees, efficient interpersonal communication, image creation, reputation and respect are essential as well (Sułkowski, 2010).

In the interpretive/symbolic paradigm, leadership can be based on the interpretation of social factors and the symbolic role of the leader. Human resources management processes are equally important. Therefore, within such understanding leadership is not a charismatic personality, but a type of relationship and social image that identifies members of the organisation. Its key elements are: execution of the mission, faith, emotions, interactions, group communication, supporting sustainable development, image and building identities of the leader and their followers (Hogg, Terry, 2000). The paradigm of radical sym-

bolism includes threads concerning power, oppression, instrumentalism in organisations and management, striving to uncover true, concealed interests of organisational actors and social groups, as well as creating conditions for increasing the organisation's effectiveness. Meanwhile, postmodernism points to the fragmentation of identity, loss of cognitive attitudes and identification of a certain group's efficiency, which may unmask their readiness for action.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the functionalist paradigm is dominant (Guba, Lincoln 2005; Denzin, Lincoln 2005), it ceases to be the sole acceptable paradigmatic lens with which to study human resources management (Legge 2005). As suggested by Lewis and Keleman (2002), the approach proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) is narrow and subject to limitations. Furthermore, when accepting one of the four paradigms, one can see how they are contradictory, note their disproportion, overlapping and integration. They do not reflect the complexity of social phenomena. There is even discussion about the interest in "alternative paradigms in human resources management" (Sułkowski, 2014), or the multi-paradigm (Lewis, Kelemen, 2002).

With increasing frequency the literature accepts the multi-paradigm approach based on epistemological and methodological pluralism (Lewis, Kelemen, 2002) as well as epistemological eclecticism (Sułkowski, 2013). The multi-paradigm approach encompasses strategies of paradigm multiplicity. Eclecticism allows for contradictions, which constitutes an answer to the multidimensionality and complexity of the organisational processes. That, in turn, means "the circular interpretation" (Sułkowski, 2013) of the research process: it constitutes a combination of hypotheses, verification, and falsification from the functionalist paradigm with the interpretation of meaning of concepts and terms from the interpretive paradigm. Therefore, it constitutes methodological triangulation.

The reasons, or perhaps causes of the application of the multi-paradigm in human resources management are, among others: multitasking, impact of various academic disciplines, focus on problems, and diversity of paradigms. The multi-paradigm is a sort of response to the threat of multiple points of view intertwining, multiple perspectives, a bricolage, where combining becomes useful and increases theoretical richness – particularly in the case of human resources management (Brewster, 1999; Mendenhall, 1999).

Implications for the theory of management

Due to changes in human resources management in the public sector, particularly these related to the development of leadership and aiming at proactive leadership, difficulties and challenges occur that researchers must face. Theoretical considerations of the subject allow to state the necessity for conducting aca-

demic deliberations in the area of human resources management from the perspective of various paradigms, which upon the application of four paradigms proposed by G. Burrell and G. Morgan, may lead to contradictions. The answer to these inconveniences can be provided by the multi-paradigm approach. According to its opponents, the isolation of paradigms and mutual ignorance is not an effective cognitive solution, as it does not present the opportunity for confrontation and discussion. The opponents of the theory also claim that the proposed new approach does not have a clearly drawn philosophical framework that would be based on ideological, ontological and epistemological premises (Mingers, 1997). Supporters of the multi-paradigm approach believe that it enables transcending communication between current paradigms and creating new information – due to referring to various ontological and epistemological premises. Thus, the same organisational phenomenon can be looked at after taking into account various aspects.

Implications for practice

In the literature, it is assumed that paradigms and their choice are meaningful not only from the perspective of the human resources management theory, but also practice. This is related to the choice of management tools. It means a focus on statistical methods – in the case of neo-positivist management tools, problem solving, effectiveness increase – in the case of interpretive and constructivist role of pragmatic methodology. However, due to various manners of consideration and in particular the meaning of proactive leadership in the public sector, we should remember about the broad spectrum. This type of leadership is not only related to making decisions based on facts or to aiming at maximum efficiency. It is also the ability and willingness to introduce changes, taking initiative, and much more. This, in turn, results in the need for the multi-paradigm that can help to bring order to the organisational reality and become a management tool.

Summary

The conducted analysis of the application of four paradigms and the multi-paradigm, taking into account proactive leadership in the public sector, allows us to state the importance of this knowledge for the theory and practice of human resources management.

The division into paradigms is important from the perspective of both theory building and practice. However, it is possible to observe tensions and dualism connected with a strict, rigorous division.

Due to the diversity of paradigms, the interdisciplinarity of human resources management, but also the multiplicity of perspectives on proactive leadership, the literature postulates the application of the multi-paradigm. It means using tools and conceptual framework borrowed from various paradigms. The best solution seems to be to adopt the approach based on epistemological and methodological pluralism, as well as epistemological eclecticism.

This chapter focused on the multi-paradigm in human resources management, particularly in the context of proactive leadership in the public sector. However, it is not free from limitations. While it fits into the discussion about alternative paradigms, these are purely theoretical deliberations. It is suggested that innovative solutions are developed in terms of human resources management in the public sector, that would take into account proactive leadership and the multi-paradigm, which will provide an answer to current postulates and challenges that public organisations are facing.

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